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# THE JEANES VISITING TEACHERS

JACKSON DAVIS

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CARNEGIE CORPORATION OF NEW YORK



THE JEANES VISITING TEACHERS



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# THE JEANES VISITING TEACHERS

JACKSON DAVIS

*Associate Director, General Education Board*

AN ADDRESS GIVEN AT THE  
INTER-TERRITORIAL JEANES CONFERENCE  
SALISBURY, SOUTHERN RHODESIA  
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## INTRODUCTION

ALTHOUGH it really needs none, I am glad to write a brief introduction for this publication of Dr. Davis's excellent Address. Since the visit of the Phelps-Stokes Commission in 1924, I have naturally taken a deep interest in the progress of education in Africa. It was while visiting a number of little one-teacher schools in the neighborhood of Mt. Kenya that it seemed apparent how beneficial might be the Jeanes plan which was doing well in the Southern States. At a small meeting held in Nairobi in the office of the then Colonial Secretary, now Sir Edward Denham, Governor of Jamaica, there was a discussion of educational matters affecting the Colony, and the Jeanes plan was mentioned. There were present the members of the Commission and others, including Mr. Orr, Director of Education of the Colony. It is now well known that, largely through the aid of the Carnegie Corporation, Mr. J. W. C. Dougall, who was a member of the Commission, developed the first African Jeanes School in Kenya. Already in various other parts of Africa work somewhat similar to that of the Jeanes Fund is being carried on with adaptations to their particular needs. It was well that the Jeanes Conference at Salisbury should be held. There can be little doubt that much good will come out of the meeting in the way of understanding and spreading a very simple plan for helping to improve the

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work done in and by the small schools in various parts of Africa.

I may be permitted to say here that in my opinion two causes have contributed most to make the Jeanes plan successful in the Southern States. Dr. Davis has mentioned these in his Address. One cause was that the Jeanes teachers looked to the local superintendents, not outside officials, as their heads. A good result of this was to enlist the special interest of local school people and others of the neighborhoods. Another cause of successful work was the fact that these teachers were given a very free hand to be of any educational service in the schools or communities.\* Such services may vary in different communities. Very interesting and often amusing have been the reports given at the conferences of Jeanes teachers. When asked in regard to any special work, some might say they had been stressing cleanliness, others that they had been stressing better cooking and nicer service of meals, others might report that they had been stressing the care of gardens, and so on. All understood, of course, that they were to do what they could, without the appearance of dictating, to help local teachers in improving the work in the schools.

Thus it was seen, and let us hope will continue to be seen, that the Jeanes teachers ought to be under local authorities and that they should be quite free from very much red-tape direction from anybody. The main problem has been,

\* See Appendix for a letter to Jeanes Teachers, issued in 1911 when Dr. Dillard was President of the Jeanes and Slater Funds.

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and always will be, to secure persons who are alert and well educated, and then let them go out and face the jobs that they will see to be most needed.

I said there was no need for any introduction to this Address of Dr. Davis. As school superintendent of Henrico County, in Virginia, he was the first in the whole South to advocate and put into effect for the entire county this plan for supervising teachers. Many copies of the first report of his teacher, Miss Virginia Randolph, were printed by the Fund, and circulated through the South as the best practical introduction to the work. Dr. Davis, soon after inaugurating the work, served for a year and a half as a member of the State Board of Examiners, and then became the first State Agent of Negro Rural Schools for the State Department of Education of Virginia. Since 1915 he has been a member of the staff of the General Education Board, founded by John D. Rockefeller, and has played a large part in the activities of this Board in promoting Negro education. So it is that what Jackson Davis has said in the present Address about the Jeanes plan, or in fact what he says about any educational matter, is worth spreading.

J. H. DILLARD

*Charlottesville, Virginia*  
*January 8, 1936*





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IN ORDER to appreciate the situation in which teachers and school administrators in Virginia found themselves at the beginning of the century, we must remember that there had been a devastating civil war, followed by a blundering period of reconstruction in which former slaves and irresponsible adventurers were given authority and control of government. This greatly embittered the whites, who in time regained control of their state governments and settled down to a generation of bitter memories and slow recovery. It also made any attempt to uplift and improve the condition of the Negro appear as a Northern policy. In most states the reconstruction government set up the new system of public free schools, which with its equal treatment of the Negro, was made a target of criticism by many Southern leaders. They said it was something which the conquering section had imposed upon the vanquished in order to destroy the Southern type of society and fix patterns typical of the dominant section.

With great wisdom and patience an able group of Southern educators who somehow came to the front pointed out that the new system was but a long step toward realization of the earlier democratic ideals of their own people, and pointed to Thomas Jefferson and a long list of men who had striven to bring about a complete system of education

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at public expense. Isolation and the individualistic tradition of plantation life prevented an earlier realization of these plans. They urged the Southern people to respond to these ideals, to make the system their own and to modify it to suit local conditions. This common-sense view came in time to prevail.

Southern leadership of this type was greatly encouraged by a small group of public-spirited men of the North, who had become interested in the South through Hampton and Tuskegee. Without agreeing with Southern prejudices, they looked with sympathy and understanding upon the practical problems of the Southern people. They saw the significance of an effective system of schools for both races in the South, and they seized the opportunity to bring into conference representative Southern leaders. There grew out of these early meetings the Annual Conference for Education in the South and the Southern Education Board. This Board was organized and given sums of money to inaugurate hopeful projects in public education, and to keep the leaders in touch with one another. This was a great encouragement to the Southern people and the way was prepared for private benefactions, which have played so important a part in Negro education.

All this ferment was going on when I became superintendent of schools in Henrico County, Virginia, in 1905. Early in that year a group of citizens organized the Co-operative Education Association of Virginia. They undertook to organize citizens around the schools and to enlist

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their support in developing an effective system of education, and in all sorts of community effort. For a rural and individualistic people this was something new. The movement was launched in what became known as the May Campaign. Public addresses on education were delivered at all the courthouses in the state, as well as at other strategic centers, beginning a movement which caused President Alderman of the University of Virginia to remark a few years later that the center of gravity had shifted from the courthouse to the schoolhouse. Two of the most active men in this work were Dr. H. B. Frissell and Dr. S. C. Mitchell. Dr. Mitchell was a gifted speaker. Dr. Frissell was at that time the Principal of Hampton Institute, a remarkable school for Negroes. He seldom spoke in public and in fact shunned publicity and remained in the background, but he had a genius for seeing opportunities and for bringing the right people together to discuss and follow them up. He threw himself unreservedly into this cause. He made no special argument for Negro schools, for he saw the educational task in the South as a whole, involving the welfare of both races. He frequently invited his friends to Hampton. On one of these occasions I had an opportunity to visit Hampton Institute with a group of teachers. I was greatly impressed with the neatness, orderliness, and efficiency of this unusual school. As I walked through the shops, the agricultural plots, and the classrooms where academic studies went hand in hand with handicrafts, I thought that if only we could adapt this kind of a program

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to the rural schools, it would put new life into them. It would develop initiative, responsibility and self-help, and the attitude of the people would change from indifference or hostility to active support when they could see the schools playing a vital part in building up the life of the community. The question was how could it be done.

The idea was further developed upon the experience of some rural extension teachers sent out by Hampton Institute, which Dr. Frissell described when I invited him to a meeting of the Negro teachers of Henrico County. Miss Anna T. Jeanes, a little Quaker lady of Philadelphia, had first given money to the principals of Hampton and Tuskegee for their work among the rural people. This interested her and led to more substantial gifts. "Others have helped the big schools; I would like, if I could, to help the little country schools," said Miss Jeanes, and so she gave the bulk of her fortune to this cause.

When the Jeanes Foundation was fully organized, with Dr. James H. Dillard as President and Director, I applied to him for assistance in employing a supervising industrial teacher to work in all the Negro schools of the county. The year before he had assisted some industrial teachers in Louisiana and Alabama, but these teachers were regularly attached to the staff of a particular school and gave occasional help to some nearby outlying schools. The idea of work in all the schools of a county appealed to him, and it was started in Henrico County in the fall of 1908. The remarkable success of the plan was due to the singular

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gifts and devotion of Miss Virginia E. Randolph. She was chosen because of the transformation of her own community through the leavening influence of her school. She was alert and open-minded to every good idea and devoted to her people. When she took charge, the school was a poorly kept one-room building; the yard was muddy, with no flowers or shrubs. She was expected simply to keep order, submit monthly reports, and teach the formal school arts—reading, writing, and arithmetic. There was no church, so she organized a Sunday School in the little schoolhouse and went back there every Sunday afternoon. The people gradually responded to her leadership as she gained their confidence. They laid off walks in the yard, planted shrubbery and flowers, and on Arbor Day they put out twelve trees and named them for the twelve apostles. All grew and flourished, but she likes to tell the story that when the school was enlarged, one of the trees had to come down to make room, and they cut down Judas.

Then they began to do practical things in the school: the girls were taught to sew, to mend their clothes and sew on buttons, and even to make their own dresses and to cook; while the boys helped about the yard, brought in the firewood, made mats of corn shucks, and attended to any simple repair work that was needed. It was not surprising that thrifty Negro farmers began to buy small tracts of land near this school and to build simple but comfortable cottages. The community grew and was known for its orderliness, its respectability, and its neighborly spirit.

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Miss Randolph started out to do these simple things in the other twenty-two rural schools of the county. There was no set plan. She visited each school and community, took in the situation and talked with the teacher about it. They interested pupils and parents and undertook to make simple improvements which they thought possible.

The following extracts from her report for that first year show what some of these things were:

### *Barton Heights School. Principal, Mary M. Scott*

"Fenced in the yard, granolithic walk, set out hedges, trees, and rosebushes, whitewashed the trees and fence, taught sewing, needlework, carpentry, and shuck mats. Amount collected during the term, \$50.05. Expended, \$10.95. Balance in treasury for next term to fit up kitchen, \$30.10."

### *Sydney School. Teacher, Martha Ross*

"The Chairman of Varina Board, Mr. S. C. Freeman, knowing how hard the teacher and patrons were working to build up their school, sent a good many workmen that he employed at Curls Neck Farm, to the school and fenced in the yard, put up belfry and bell, graveled the walk, built a porch, made benches and set out hedges; free of charge. He also assisted many of the other schools whenever called upon. Taught sewing and needlework. Amount collected, \$5.30. Expended, \$1.50. Balance in treasury, \$3.80."

It was interesting to watch the attitude of the people toward industrial work in the schools. At first they opposed it, partly perhaps from the natural prejudice against anything new, but mainly because they feared that industrial work would interfere with the academic work of the chil-

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dren. They thought of education in terms of books and symbols and not in terms of successful living and performance of the common tasks of everyday life in the home and on the farm. As time went on they found the children learning to do things with their hands, taking a fresh interest in their books and being more helpful at home because of the useful things they had learned to do. They also wanted to make things orderly and attractive. Opposition in most cases gave way to cordial support, for soon the parents of the children were asked to come to the school, and they organized themselves into school improvement leagues. If they needed a new schoolhouse or a larger one, they began to raise money for it and to offer to assist the county board of education in putting up the building, through contributions of money, of lumber or other material, or of labor. In this way the limited funds available from public tax funds accomplished far greater results, and the people felt a personal sense of ownership and responsibility for the school. It was a discipline in self-help and in the responsibility of citizenship of the highest value. When the Rosenwald Fund began to aid in the erection of Negro rural schoolhouses, the Jeanes teachers were nearly always the ones to get the community aroused and at work, and the offer of outside assistance was a powerful lever.

From the beginning Dr. Dillard pointed out to the Jeanes teachers that they were under the direction of the county superintendent as were the other teachers, that they were there to help and not to boss the other teachers. He gave

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no instructions but urged them to get acquainted with the teachers and the people, and to work with them for the things that they needed most. He said that some industrial work was expected in the schools to make education genuine and effective in terms of everyday life, and he suggested that they get acquainted with the Negro ministers and work with them.

The Jeanes Visiting Teachers may be thought of in the four major aspects of their work: (1) with the county superintendents of education, (2) with the teachers, (3) with the pupils, and (4) with the community.

(1) The Jeanes teacher was always appointed by the county superintendent of education and worked under his direction. The county superintendent of education is the responsible administrative officer in charge of education. All the educational agencies of the state, supervisory and administrative, clear through his office. In some counties there was a tendency for the superintendent to regard the Jeanes teacher as his assistant in visiting and reporting on Negro schools and relieving him to that extent. In general, however, the Jeanes teacher has gone about as a helping teacher with the support and interest of the superintendent.

Almost without exception they developed the superintendent's interest in the Negro schools. They made constant reports of their work, sought advice and guidance, and interpreted the needs and aspirations of the people. This made for a better understanding and a greater desire

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to encourage the teachers and the people in making conditions better. I know of one superintendent who took charge of his office saying to the board that appointed him that he was not interested in the Negro schools. He had no enthusiasm for educating Negro children. The Jeanes teacher laid siege to him and within a year he was advocating to his board strong measures to improve the Negro schools. Mr. B. C. Caldwell, for many years a field director of the Jeanes Foundation, wisely remarked that of all the superintendents of schools with whom he came in contact, he always found that a man who had good Negro schools had good white schools also, but the converse did not always hold true. The Negro work was a touchstone of his broad humanity and of his professional spirit.

(2) The rural teachers, working in isolation, often in dilapidated old buildings, sometimes in churches or lodge buildings when the county had not put up a school building, welcomed the visiting teacher who came with outside prestige to back up her efforts with pupils and parents. The Jeanes teacher would go over her daily program and offer suggestions as to the distribution of time to the different studies and activities; she would start a class in sewing and cooking, perhaps teaching the class at first and then helping the teacher lay out plans for further work until she could come around on her next visit. After more experience the local teacher would go ahead on her own initiative and encourage any kind of practical interest or skill of the pupils. The teacher would feel the need of further preparation, and

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the summer schools of Hampton, Tuskegee, and the State agricultural and mechanical colleges became crowded with alert teachers seeking to fit themselves for greater usefulness. In some states it was not unusual for one-half the teachers to be enrolled in a summer school, for the meagerly prepared teachers in service had to be given a larger opportunity while plans were being developed for the more thorough training of new teachers.

(3) In general, the contact of the Jeanes teacher with the pupils has been through the local teachers. But often, through the organization of clubs of the older boys and girls for some home, garden, or farm project, the contact became direct and was of great influence. These practical projects, successfully carried out, aroused ambition and instilled confidence in the abler pupils, and made them want more education. The Jeanes teachers have encouraged many of them to stay in school for the completion of the course and then helped them to find a way to go on to the larger school or to college.

(4) The most distinctive feature of the Jeanes work consists of the practical community activities which have been carried on so successfully wherever the Jeanes teachers have gone. They make education real and genuine by connecting the schools with the home and community needs of the people and they organize and guide the people in many practical undertakings that develop self-help and a sense of responsibility. This naturally results in a better understanding of the society of which they are a part and in a

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cooperative attitude in all matters in which community action is essential.

I recall a meeting in a new schoolhouse built entirely by the people. It had two well-arranged classrooms and replaced an old building of only one room. The Jeanes teacher had found the school overcrowded and urged a new building. The president of the School Improvement League took pride in reporting the successful accomplishment. He then turned to the superintendent and said:

"Mr. Washington, when you told us we could build this school, we didn't think we could, but now we know we can do any good thing that we make up our minds to do."

The superintendent had been entirely sympathetic, but the best he could promise was to provide two teachers instead of one from county funds. There were no funds available for the building. In putting up this building the people had discovered themselves as a community and no one could see their pride of achievement without being aware of its deep significance.

When the Farm Demonstration Work was developed by Dr. Seaman A. Knapp, it was soon followed by work for women and girls. The first organizations were Canning Clubs, Garden Clubs, or Tomato Clubs, as they were sometimes called. The early work was done through the financial assistance of the General Education Board and, when a beginning was made among Negroes, it was natural to turn to the Jeanes teachers. They were employed for the summer months and they set to work to organize the older

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girls and their mothers into the Home Makers' Clubs. They cultivated home gardens under direction and then put up the surplus fruit and vegetables in glass jars or tin cans for winter use. They met in one another's homes and these homes were swept and garnished for the occasion. Their programs included practical demonstrations in cooking, canning, sewing, and discussions of the problems of household management, sanitation, and water supply.

I recall a trip I made some years ago with one of the Jeanes teachers to visit the home gardens under her guidance. I have never seen anyone treated with more consideration and affection than this teacher. There was scarcely a home in which she had not exerted some decisive influence. In one home a member of the family had recently died of tuberculosis. The disease was contracted elsewhere and the patient returned home too far gone to recover. The Jeanes teacher tactfully told the mother about the infectious nature of the disease and how to care for the patient and protect the other members of the family, so that none of them contracted it. The look on that old mother's face was a benediction.

The Home Makers' Clubs and all other phases of the home and farm demonstration work begun by Dr. Knapp, and fostered by the General Education Board, have been taken over as a part of a national system of agricultural extension work carried on through the state agricultural colleges. Many of the Negro home demonstration agents are former Jeanes teachers.

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Some of the larger counties of the South have full-time health officers and some have public health nurses. The number of Negro health nurses is small, but is increasing. As yet most of the counties, and all the poorer ones, cannot afford a health nurse and the Jeanes teacher is still the person who gets across to the people through the schools the lessons of health and sanitation.

In recent years there has been a tendency in many of the Southern states to put upon the Jeanes teachers more of the duties of a supervisor of instruction. The fact that home and farm demonstration agents and special teachers of agriculture and domestic science are provided, in many cases, naturally leads the Jeanes teacher to look after the more formal aspects of the school program. As the local teachers are better educated, there is a demand for a supervisor to guide and help them with their whole program. The Jeanes teachers are rendering an increasing service in this type of work. In some cases, perhaps, they have carried it too far and have lost sight of the earlier aims, but there seems to be a reaction toward greater appreciation of the distinctive features of the Jeanes work—the practical community activities.

Perhaps I can best illustrate this by describing one of the typical county exhibits. The Jeanes teachers early hit upon the idea of having a county-wide exhibit at some central point either at one of the large schools or in the county courthouse. In King William County, Virginia, I have attended several of these annual exhibits. The Jeanes

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teacher directs the entire program and is in the background. Most of the children as well as their parents come for a day to the county training school, which is centrally located, bringing their luncheons and having a sort of picnic. Each school assembles an exhibit of the papers written, the handicrafts, and the interesting work in drawing or design. In the handicrafts there are usually samples of sewing, handmade garments, ax handles, baskets, chairs, tables, and other pieces of furniture. These exhibits are attractively arranged and the name of the school is neatly printed on a card. They are then inspected and judged by a committee, and great interest is taken as the awards of ribbons are made.

When the parents and friends are assembled, the older girls from the larger schools give an exhibit of their work in sewing. They wear dresses which they have made, and go through drills on the platform. The audience is able to judge the skill, taste, and attractiveness of their work. A committee of judges also passes upon these exhibits and there is the keenest interest in the award of prizes. At the appropriate time, the boys and girls and men and women who have worked under the guidance of the special teachers of agriculture or the home and farm demonstration agents assemble outside in their different clubs. Then they are arranged in order and march in procession about the school grounds carrying banners and placards indicating briefly the results of the work undertaken by each club. These tell very human and interesting stories. For example, a group of girls would be organized into a Poultry Club and a

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brief statement showing their results and profit would be given. There would also appear a special group of children who had not been late for school, or who had not missed a day, and children who in the medical inspection were rated as five-point children, that is, children with no physical defects or with defects remedied. The procession finally enters the assembly hall and there are usually talks from visitors and reports from the various clubs of boys and girls, as well as parents. At frequent intervals they sing. I recall one melody which seemed to stir the audience deeply. It followed a brief report on what the county was doing to meet the depression. The refrain was "I'll never give my journey over 'til I reach my home."

In this county, the people own small farms and have little wealth, but have a comfortable living. They look forward eagerly to this meeting once a year. The Jeanes teachers have conceived this method of promoting a sense of solidarity on the part of the people, and they make it an occasion for recognizing and honoring students and adults who have done successful work. No one could attend one of these meetings without being deeply moved. It is the Jeanes work at its best!



## APPENDIX





## A LETTER TO JEANES TEACHERS

I TAKE this means of addressing each one of you on the subject of our work. You are one of a body of workers whose salaries are paid by this Fund for the purpose of enabling you to devote whatever ability and skill you possess, and all your most earnest efforts, to the betterment of the rural schools and communities of your race in our Southern states. You know, in a general way, that our desire is for you to do whatever you can for school and neighborhood improvement in the communities which may be reached by you. Purposely you have not been given very specific rules and directions, and this for two reasons. First, the work of this Fund is new both in time and in plan. It is necessary to learn gradually the best way of doing things, so that the work may be intelligent as well as earnest. Second, conditions vary from State to State, from county to county and even from community to community. The kind and method of work best suited to one place may not be suitable in another place. For this reason it is to be expected that the reports which you make each month should show considerable difference in the character of work.

You can see that it would be difficult to prescribe precisely what each worker should do, but enough is known to guide you in the main lines. You should keep in touch with the school officials and show that you desire to work in

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accord with them. You should exercise tact and discretion in dealing with the teachers of the schools which you visit, and show that you have no desire to usurp authority but wish to be a helper and fellow-worker. You should assist in organizing the people of the community into associations for self-help, for school improvement, for extension of terms, for sanitation or any other good purpose. You should co-operate with the minister or ministers of the community, and thus endeavor to bring the great influence of the churches to bear upon the practical life of the people. You should introduce into the schools such simple forms of industrial work as may be needful and helpful, and will tend to show the connection between the school and the daily life of the community. You should by word and example endeavor to promote orderliness, promptness, and cleanliness, being particularly careful, for the sake of the influence on the children, that the school-rooms and school surroundings, no matter how poor, be kept neat and tidy, and in as good condition as possible. You should urge and demand care and accuracy in the work which you supervise, remembering that one good purpose of such training is to prevent the doing of things in a slovenly way.

While, as has been said, your reports show that you are not all working in the same way, yet it seems true that all of you are doing good in the various places in which your work lies. On the whole it appears that those of you who are doing no actual teaching yourselves, except through the local teachers, are accomplishing more than those who are

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teaching the children directly; but I write now not in the spirit of criticism. I wish rather to express gratification at the zeal and earnestness and missionary spirit which so many are showing. You seem zealous in embracing the opportunity of doing something for the welfare, improvement, and encouragement of those who stand in need of better training and better advantages. If you have not this spirit, you should not be in this work.

JAMES H. DILLARD

1911









